

What is Love? by rileyhart

Series: [What is Love? A definition by Mike and El. \[4\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

El stumbles across a word in her book she does not understand and asks Mike for the definition.

What is Love?

Author's Note:

Set a year after the events of 'After El' (you do not need to have read for this though). El has been living with the Byers for the past few months.

The basement is still, Mike's old violin music playing quietly (El says it soothes her). Mike and El are lying on opposite ends of the couch reading, their legs stretched out; their ankles and feet comfortably entangled.

El frowns as she comes across a word she doesn't understand. "Mike?" she says quietly, looking over her book.

Mike looks up, putting down his book.

"What's love?" she asks, curiously.

Mike feels a flush begin to creep up his neck and across his face. "Love?" he chokes.

She nods, not sensing his embarrassment.

"Um..." he sits up, "it's like, when..." he sighs, stretching the back of his neck. She sits up too, waiting patiently, no sign of annoyance on his face.

"You know my mom and my dad and Nancy?"

El nods, and puts down her own book.

"They're my family, and I love them, even when they annoy me, because if something bad happened to them I'd be really upset. Like with the boys, I love them too. It's when you really care for someone, a lot. But there's... uh, there's different kinds of love," he tries to explain.

"Different kinds of love?" El asks, sounding confused.

"Yeah, why don't you, uh, look it up in your dictionary," he suggests. Having been isolated throughout her childhood, there was a lot of words El didn't know, so one of the things Joyce had bought her, once she'd gone to live with her, was a dictionary.

El shrugs. "I left it at home, plus, I like it better when you explain words."

Mike feels his face turning red again. "Uh, okay, well I love my mom and she loves me, but not in the same way she loves my dad, or used to at least."

El frowns for a moment, before saying, "Like Nancy and Jonathan?"

Mike nods, "Yeah, exactly,"

"And Joyce and Jim?"

It takes Mike a moment to process what El had just said. "Joyce and Hopper?!"

El nods.

"Whoa, okay," he shakes his head with slight disbelief, he has *lots* of questions, but decides that they're for later.

"Mike?" El asks, in her small quiet way, and she shuffles over closer to him.

"Yeah, El?" he moves closer to her too, so that they're now sitting in the middle of the couch, their shoulders touching.

"Do you love me?" Her big brown eyes pour into his, and Mike's heart goes into overdrive. He knows she's just genuinely curious, that

life and love are all new to her, that she's not *trying* to put him on the spot, but it kind of feels that way.

"I-" he hesitates, looking into her eyes. "Yes," he says finally.

El's hands begin to twist in her lap. "In what way?"

He wants to say '*that way*' but has suddenly forgotten how to speak, plus, he's pretty sure 14 years olds are not supposed to be in love, they're supposed to make-out and play Seven Minutes in Heaven, not be in love.

He's certain his face is the colour of a tomato by now.

A small smile works its way onto El's face. "In this way?"

And then he has no idea what is happening, or how it is happening, but El leans forward and kisses him gently. It is so different from their last kiss, which was quick and fleeting and uncertain, and almost two years ago. It's soft and slow and innocent, and Mike thinks his heart might burst from happiness. It's short and lasts just long enough for El's hand to find its way to Mike's.

"Yes," Mike whispers, when they break apart, "I love you in that way."

El beams. "I love you in that way too," she says tenderly.

She entwines her hand with Mike's, their fingers interlocking with each other, she reaches over and picks up her book, before resting her head on Mike's shoulder and continuing to read, only letting go of his hand to turn a page.

Mike sits there, relaxed; he watches El read, completely in awe of this girl who he *loves*, and who loves him too.